

Testimony of Kyle Wark

In support of H.B. 5205 An Act Concerning Fair Rent Commissions and H.B. 5233 An Act Concerning Evictions For Cause

Dear representatives and members of the committee, my name is Kyle Wark. I am a resident of Manchester Connecticut who is here to testify in support of H.B 5205, an act concerning fair rent commissions as well as H.B. 5233 an act concerning evictions for cause.

I believe that we should have Fair Rent Commissions in cities and towns with populations of 14,000 or more. Only 21 towns in Connecticut have fair rent commissions. Tenants should have a realistic opportunity to stop unfair rent increases or payments. Rent has increased by 12% on average in Connecticut in the last 18 months. Vacancy rates are also down meaning tenants are likely having a difficult time finding housing they can actually afford. I've seen on numerous occasions in different complexes around Connecticut, tenants having their rent increased in apartments that are unsafe living spaces. This would include pests and rodents, mold, broken plumbing, no heat or air conditioning for months at a time, broken walls and ceilings etc.

Tenants that are living in cities or towns that have a Fair Rent Commission have a practical form of advocating for themselves on the matter of rent increases or obtaining a freeze or reduction in rent. Fair Rent Commissions should be required in our larger cities and towns so that tenants can be equally protected from unfair rent increases. Speaking from personal experience, I've dealt with some of these issues first hand spending time with my father in numerous apartment complexes that had broken utilities. Even the infrastructure of some of these buildings would be falling apart, all while the landlord would continue to raise rent. He's moved 5 times in the past 7 years due to these issues impacting his ability to settle down in a home. Human beings deserve proper housing.

Speaking on H.B. 5233 an act concerning evictions for cause, this bill would make it illegal for tenants in a building of 5 or more units to be evicted without cause (an example of this being falling behind on rent or breaching the lease). Right now Connecticut law prohibits eviction of tenants in buildings with 5 or more units without just cause where a member of the household is 62 or older or has certain disabilities. This bill would extend those protections to all tenants, supporting housing stability, slowing gentrification ,and preventing the displacement of tenants at the free will of their landlords. Also giving tenants more protection to organize together without having to worry about no-cause evictions due to retaliation against tenants. Evictions destabilize lives. Evictions can ruin the well being of people causing job loss and homelessness, undermining education, negatively impacting physical and mental health.

I strongly support H.B. 5205 and H.B. 5233 and urge you to favorably vote these bills out of the housing committee.

Sincerely,

Kyle Wark
Manchester, CT